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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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FORELOOKINGS.

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death."—Prov. xiv. 12.

It seems very strange to some that all the dangers of this mortal state should seem to be concentrated upon men ; that the crown of creation, the sons of God, the heirs of immortality, should seem to have their lot cast in the midst of circumstances which are full of snares and dangers.

The dangers in all the realms below man are very few, and very simple, and very brief in their scope. There is the danger of maiming, and the danger of dying, and these are all. The great insect tribe finds its way, almost at once, to the end for which it was created. The great animal creation, that range the air, that swim the sea, that browse through the fields, seldom find themselves out of the path. They follow the law of their nature. They attain to the end of their existence. But man, who is called the noblest of God's creatures, is perpetually stumbling ; is perpetually warped, biased, perverted, tangled ; is perpetually plunged to the right or to the left ; is perpetually threatened with sudden destructions of every kind. He is the sublimest spectacle in his integrity and greatness, and the most wretched in his wreck and ruin. The animals carry but little, and it takes but little to carry it. They have slender endowments. Their appetites mostly guide them. Their instincts are very low and very few. The things that they are appointed to do are very few and very simple. Man is more complex. He lives in a higher sphere. His duties are transcendently greater, more numerous and more noble. He is equipped accordingly. He carries a great

nature, with great fruitfulness therein. By as much as his affairs are multiplied, by so much are his chances of elevation increased. He varies most because he has the most power of variation, and because the combinations possible to one so richly endowed are almost infinite. If there be but three letters in an alphabet, the words that can be made out of it are very few, and easily computable ; but if there be thirty letters, the words that can be made out of it are endless. Animals have but few faculties. Man has many. The permutations and adaptations, the noble attainments or ignoble results, are without number.

All men alike are brought into life in a state of helplessness and ignorance. It is not true that all men are born equal or alike. There are unquestionable hereditary tendencies. The habits that have been bred in parents and grand-parents, along the ancestral line, are apt to show themselves in the children. Peculiar faculties are handed down from generation to generation. But all are born alike in this : that they have to begin and find out the ways of life. The equipments and means by which men may learn these ways are better in some than in others ; but all have to learn ; all are obliged to gather experience for themselves ; and although the experience of parents can guard children so long as they are under their authority, and although they may influence them very powerfully, it is not possible for any parent to transmit the whole of his experience to his children. Neither is it possible for any teacher to transmit the whole of his experience to his pupils.

Every man has to find out much for himself. All drill, all trial, implies mistake. And so, in the beginning of life, where all ways seem almost alike, it is a great mercy that the voice of God's Word sounds out to every one, " Beware ; take heed to thy steps ; watch ;" that it says to all those who seem safe, that they are not alike safe ; that, in the language of the text, it says, " There are ways which seem right to men, but the ends thereof are death."

How shall that be ? Why should ways seem right, and yet be wrong ? There are many things whose nature does not disclose itself at once. There are many things that in

the beginning are apparently harmless, but that, when they have had time to grow and come to their full and final nature, are found to be most dangerous.

I take it that the young of venomous animals may seem beautiful. I know that the cubs of the tiger are charming playthings. Very safe, sweet and beautiful are they for our children to play with; but they are not safe playthings for children, or for grown people, when they begin to come to their full nature. In the beginning, most graceful and most winsome; in the end, most cruel and most bloodthirsty are they. And there are many ways of life that are like these things. They begin innocent: they end cruel.

A large part of evil in this world may be said to be excess in things good. There can be no question but that economy and frugality are virtues; yet what is the avarice of the miser but economy and frugality carried to excess? In substantial quality they are alike. They differ only in the degree of development. There can be no question but that displeasure at things evil is good, and that without it a man must be imperfect. The power of indignation is a power of virtue. The lack of a sense of revulsion from things wrong is a lack of essential manhood. And yet, although indignation and anger, within certain bounds, are virtues, how wretched is the man who is given up to temper, not knowing how to control it, or to yoke it with its true fellows, or to restrain it by the presence of the higher moral faculties!

If you trace one and another of the great mature powers of men, you will find that, if they act thus far, and under certain dominant influences, they are beneficial, but that otherwise they are vicious. Their danger, in the latter instance, is commensurate with their excellence in the former.

So men are often deceived in the ways of life, as they look upon them at first, because the point where good breaks off and evil begins to be developed is not easily discerned. So men enter upon ways that seem right, and are right in some degree, and soon find themselves reaping penalties that come from transgression. There are ways that seem right to men, but are very dangerous. It is hard to convince men that ways which seem pleasurable, and the effect of which at present is

pleasurable, are dangerous. This is especially so in the experience of men who are conceited; with those who have an overweening conception of their own discretion, and of their power of throwing off danger when it manifests itself.

In general, it is true that pleasure is the fruit of obedience. Botanists tell us that fragrant plants, plants with agreeable odors, are usually not poisonous; and that, on the other hand, almost all dangerous plants are fetid in their smell. So, in general, it may be said that punishment is an indication of transgression, and pleasure is a sign of obedience. To a certain degree this is a true diagnosis. Nevertheless, it is true that pain sometimes indicates the highest degree of virtue. To suffer is to be a man. To suffer was once the sign of a God. And those who follow the highest model are sufferers voluntarily—are sufferers because they are breaking down the law of the lower nature for the sake of the supremacy of the higher nature. On the other hand, pleasure, which in a thousand instances is a sign that men are doing right, may, in thousand instances, be a sign that they are beginning to do wrong; as, for instance, the pleasures that beguile their indolence, or the pleasures which they derive from the indulgence of their senses. The difficulty of understanding lies in the fact that while men feed the eye, and the ear, and the tongue, and the hand—while all the senses are in moderate use, giving blandishments and comforts to life—they are feeding the sensuous nature. If there were no other nature, the indication would be that men were in the right path, and that the ends thereof would be pleasure.

The ox rises betimes in the morning. He is hungry. He browses in the field, and is satisfied. He lies down in the shade, and is comfortable. In the afternoon he rises again, and his appetite is supplied. At night he sleeps. And thus he fulfills the whole round of his being; for there is nothing beyond eating and drinking and sleeping for an ox to do to satisfy his needs. He has no conscience, no hope, no faith, no intellectual outlook—only a sensuous life. And the quiet satisfactions which he derives, are sure indications, so far as the mere senses are concerned, that pleasure is not carried to excess, and that it is ministering to benefit. As for us, if

there were no years before us ; if youth was to be carried on, and nothing was to be built upon it ; if there were no social nature, no moral nature, no intellectual nature, to develop, and if in development there were no need of instruction, or exercise, or suffering, those same indications would be perfectly plain for our guidance. And the young are unable to see how there can be danger in pleasures ; they say, "Is it possible that there can be vice in that which gives quiet and content ? Is it possible that joys which are so pleasant that by them one whiles away day after day, and beguiles hour after hour, can be evil ? Is it possible that that which gives sober delight can be dangerous ?" In the beginning it is not ; but there is nothing that is so fatal to the ends of life as living for the present, for the transient, for anything but that which you pitch far forward in life, as the ideal of your character. You are to build for the immortality that lies beyond this life ; that is why the passing pleasures of sense are dangerous—they are luring you away from the pursuit of the only pleasure that will stand, in the great life to which you are surely hastening. Any person who lives from day to day, saying, "These ways are ways of pleasantness, and therefore I will dwell in them," needs to be taught that they are ways which seem right to men, but whose ends are death.

I have been speaking thus far of evils that are in themselves harmless ; but there is much evil which is known for evil as soon as it is seen, but which, before manifesting itself openly, runs through what may be called an incubation.

If you visit the sick-room of one who suffers from scarlatina, and the seeds of disease are taken into your own system, you do not know it immediately. You do not know it to-day, nor to-morrow, nor this week, nor within ten days or a fortnight, perhaps. The evil does not strike like a viper, instantly. It lies dormant at first, and takes a long period, the length of the period being in proportion to the complexity of the fatality. Small evils generally hatch quick ; and great evils are a long while hatching. If I plant my lettuce-seeds, I shall know in a week whether the man who sold them to me cheated me or not—whether he gave me

the kind I wanted or not ; for a few warm nights, and one warm shower, and a few coaxing days of sunlight, will bring them out. They spring up quickly. But if I buy my young fruit-trees from the nursery, and set them out, I must wait five or ten years before I can tell whether I have been cheated or not. My lettuce comes to maturity in a few weeks ; but my fruit-trees do not bear until years have elapsed.

Now, the most inconsequential elements of life are those that report themselves quickest, with superficial results ; but the most fundamental and radical elements do not report themselves until they have had a long period of development ; and there are many things that in the beginning seem all right and fair, but which, after due development, in the end bring death. Watch them ; they will destroy you !

It is a fact that men are busy with their fellow-men to beguile them. In this life we act on each other, far more than we are acted on by great natural agents. Men in society are producing more effects upon each other than the sun, than the showers, than the seasons, than the whole world of nature ; because men apply themselves with such knowledge and skill ; because they know how to strike the sensitive chords in their fellow-men. The human mind is the most powerful instrument that can be employed for the stimulation of men in society ; for the waking up of everything that is in them.

It may seem strange that God should have created a world in which men eat each other up ; but he has. There is scarcely a plant known that has not its devourer somewhere about it—some insect, or grub, which preys upon its very life. There is no animal that has not its parasite—its dangerous enemy. And there are destroyers in every way and walk of life. That combativeness and destructiveness which are found throughout the whole of physical nature reproduce themselves, and carry on their analogies, in the bosom of society. There are multitudes of men whose trade it is to beguile their fellow-men and destroy them. In many instances they are men who study it as an art. They acquaint themselves with ethnology and psychology, and know how to touch their

victims ; how to take away fear ; how to inspire hope ; how to infuse pleasure ; how to give joy. If men were as active and skillful in the art of saving their fellows as they are in the art of destroying them, how great a difference would there be in the results of living in human society !

I sometimes sit, on a summer's day, in a listless mood, to see with what exquisite skill a spider has spun his web, and fastened it, here to an odorous shrub, there to a twining vine, covering the mouth of the bell-shaped morning-glory, with all its dew-beaded lines running to the center. In this web, which is fair as the gossamer of heaven itself, lies the little spinner. The web is beautiful, and it is spun just where the gauzy insect will make his thoroughfare, seeking to fly through ; and there lies the spinner to catch and to devour. He is hateful to me, until I think that a spider has as much right to live as I have ; that he has as much right to his flies as I have to my chickens ; that God made his stomach, and caused him to hunger, and taught him to spin his web, and permits him to devour.

Whatever may be the fact as to whether men were born to be omnivorous or carnivorous animals, it is sure that they thrive by eating each other, that there is a divine constitution in this matter, with regard to men as well as in regard to that spider. And though I sometimes strike the spider in what seems to me to be his nefarious work, I never do it without rebuking myself, and saying, "He has spun this beauteous web that God taught him to spin, that thus God might give him his food in due season." But so I do not feel when I look, in society, upon the *human* spider, that spins his web of beauty, and surrounds it with all that is sweet and relishful to the senses, and coils himself up in his round hole, or at some central point, and seeks his victims to devour them, that he may have their gold, and sacrifices them, body and soul, for time and eternity, that he may fill his own cruel maw. These men who live to seduce the innocent and unwary ; these men whose business it is, looking on society, to catch those who can be caught easily, who can be beguiled, who can be drawn into ten thousand mischiefs—they linger in our cities. Multitudes of men are busy throwing up the dust of

magic, through which the young shall see things in false colors. They are misinterpreting facts, they are feeding vanity, they are stirring pride, they are firing the imagination, they are working up all the lurid passions that they may destroy men; that they may lead them in ways of death; that they may squeeze the bloody wine into their own cup. There is not a town or city where some miscreant does not lurk, and watch for the souls of men. Oh how, by the guileful, are the ways of vice made beautiful and attractive!

In the western country, where they tote game, they build enclosures for wild turkeys, and strew grain under the rails, along a deep trench dug for the purpose; and the turkeys, with their heads down, pick up the grain, and, without suspecting their danger, go into the trap that is set for them. It is the nature of a turkey, when he is caught, to carry his head high. He never will stoop except when he is feeding. Being in the enclosure, as he will not lower his head, and as he cannot rise on the wing unless he has running ground, he cannot escape. That is just the way young men are caught. They go along feeding, feeding, feeding, carrying their head low, and creeping into the enclosure; and then, being proud, and carrying their head high, they cannot escape, and are destroyed.

"There is a way which seemeth right to a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death."

It is certainly one of the most agreeable and charming of hours when half a dozen young fellows are assembled in a little quiet room, where are provided for them, in the most attractive manner, the choicest of viands and liquors. What can be better than good fellowship, where you can get the best of everything to eat, and drink, and smoke? What can be more joyful than for companions to be "hail fellows well met" from day to day, from week to week, and from month to month? And as days go on, with the frequent repetition of this pleasant indulgence, the taint that lay undeveloped in the blood of one of these young men begins to spring up. It only needed a spark to set on fire a train that has come down from ancestors of several generations back. And he goes on

from moderate indulgence to dissipation, and from dissipation to intoxication. Another grows careless in his habits. Another feels the tedium of hard work, and longs for companionship, and becomes uneasy, and frequents the saloon where he finds agreeable fellowship, and enjoys good drinks, and good stories, and stories that are not so good.

By and by twenty years have gone, and where are these young men? Somebody asks, "Where is No. 1?" "Well," the reply is, "his health failed, and he went to sea, and died on the voyage. Consumption, they said he had." "Where is No. 2?" "I do not know. He did poorly in business; he was sent on to the plains; and when I last heard of him he was somewhere among the mines, in the mountains." "Where is No. 3?" "Oh, he's alive; but everybody that knows him wishes he was dead." "Where is No. 4?" "Well, he is about the only one that escaped. He broke away, and got clear. I believe he is now a minister somewhere." "Where is No. 5?" "In Greenwood."

If I knew the names, I suppose I could, from the persons that lived in Brooklyn thirty years ago, in easy circumstances, and in respectable society, select thousands of young men, amiable, well-intentioned, fairly educated, with every business prospect, and about whom was every rational hope, but who went down the way of death, for no other reason than because they thought it was perfectly safe, as they knew it to be perfectly delightful, to indulge in those incipient steps out of which came intoxication and ruin. I do not know what it is that makes young men who hate liquor want to drink. I was myself brought up by a temperate father. I never but once saw him touch liquor in all my boyhood; and then it was after he had been sick, and on a chilly Sunday morning. I remember that he went into the closet, and turned out a little rum, and drank it. I had heard him preach against the use of intoxicating liquors, I had listened to the delivery of his six sermons on intemperance, and I knew the history of them; and this act of his surprised me.

In my youth I was curious to know what wine was like; I was bewitched to taste it; and I entered into an arrangement with George Woodruff for the gratification of that curiosity.

I was to give him the money, he was to buy the wine, and we were to go out into the lot to drink it. There was a kind of fascination about it, I wanted to see what it was—and I did see what it was! Happily I was not lured by it. It was not spiced, it was not sweetened; and it burned and disgusted me. How many there are that have that same desire! It is contrary to the custom and teaching of their parents and homes; but they want to taste and see!

And then, how many there are who have no real appetite for wine, but have a sense of shame in not taking it when it is offered to them, or when they see others take it! Gentlemen drink, and they want to drink. The same is true in regard to smoking. Oh! that there might be a feeling among men that to be a gentleman was to be a clean man, and not to create a stench! But our young men do n't want to be clean! A young man of a clean mouth, unsmeared by sour beer or intoxicating drinks, and unsmoked by tobacco, feels uneasy till he can get the nasty smell on him, in his hair, through and through his skin, and his whole composition. Then he begins to think he is a gentleman. If ill odors make gentlemen, I can find in the field the ripest specimens!

Besides, how many young persons are fascinated with thoughts that I should not call vices, but that are eggs out of which will be hatched vices!

These ways of indulging the appetites in which there is no thrift; in which there is no promise of good; in which there is an experience the hearing of which ought to make every man's ears tingle; at the entrance of which, if one could only hear what is whispered, a voice says, "Those who enter here go in the ways of death,"—these ways take hold of other courses, that I will not name, but that lead to destruction.

Glittering visions, that make a fairy-scene of life; temptations that transform the whole inward experience, and make a new history; false appearances, that are full of promises of triumph—these carry men steadfastly down to death. Ways that are full of pleasantness at the beginning, but the ends of which are death, are prepared purposely by men who are stewards of the devil, all through our cities and towns and villages.

Even lawful things often cease to be lawful. There are no nobler amusements than many of those which have been proscribed. They are so struck through with temptations, or they are associated with temptations in such a way, that it is not safe for men to use them. Perfectly safe it is, for me, to go into a ten-pin alley, night after night, though it is not for many a young man, where there is a bar at one end and a fool at the other. What is a better game than billiards ? and what is a more dangerous place for a young man than a billiard saloon ? In your father's house it is a game of which no one need be ashamed ; but in a place where it is just one element in a whole nest of temptations, you should be ashamed to be found, because it is so near to dangers, and you are so callow, so excitable, and so easily drawn into evils. There are many games of the household that are in themselves harmless, but that on a Western steamboat are harmful. They stand so easily and naturally connected with gambling that, though they seem innocent in the beginning, in the end they are destructive. A young man comes up from an obscure quarter, and is introduced into the society of those who are the belles and beaux of society. He finds it to be the custom among his new associates to play cards for a small stake ; and he plays with them, just to make the game interesting. He has been cautioned about such things, and he is acting against his judgment. He does not like to play for money ; but the company that he is in do it, and he waives his objections. He acts on the principle that *Among Romans one must do as Romans do*—a maxim which only needs a little extension to make it read, *Among devils one must do as devils do!* This principle would make it necessary, if he found himself in the company of professional gamblers, to become a professional gambler. He has taken down the barrier which stood between him and temptation. And so, little by little, he goes on. By-and-by he may escape, if he is in fortunate circumstance. If, however, he is in other circumstances, he will perish. Some will go free ; many will be caught.

But I am not speaking of any particular form of game : I am speaking of the general fact that it is dangerous for men

to indulge in pleasures which stand near temptations, and temptations that are meant to be seductive, and to draw men down to perdition. It is dangerous for men to stand in the neighborhood of such temptations, I do not care how innocent the things are *per se*. It was perfectly innocent for me to ride on a mule up the sides of Swiss mountains ; but it was perfectly provoking the way the mule would take the very edge of the path, when there was a precipice three or four thousand feet deep below me, so that if the animal had made a misstep I would have been dashed to pieces. Thousands of men are riding mules—that is, themselves—on the outer edge of dangerous paths ; and it will only require one small mistake to throw them to the bottom of a deep precipice. And no man has a right to live even a moral life in such a way that his path winds around so near a precipice that the slightest deviation from the exact course shall destroy him.

A gentleman in Central New York, who carried on a large business, needed funds ; and he endorsed a neighbor's name on sundry notes, with which he got money out of the bank. The first note became due, and he paid it. He was able to meet it, and he knew he should be. The second note became due, and he paid it. The third became due, and he paid that. Before the next was due he was stricken down with a bilious fever. He had the means of paying it, but he was out of his head. This fourth note was protested, and the fraud was found out when it went to the endorsers. The man intended no dishonesty. He was able to meet the notes, and he meant to ; and yet, he was caught on the last one. I saw him in Auburn. The Chaplain told me there was no better man in the prison. (There were a great many men in that prison that I thought ought to be out ; and there were a great many out that I thought ought to be in.) Now, is it safe for an honest man to carry himself along the edge of dishonesty, even if his intention is good ?

I do not know but I am talking to men who have done that same thing, and escaped. Because you have escaped, I suppose the enormity of the peril does not strike your mind ; but if you had had that man's experience of a few years at Auburn, I think it would have changed your impressions

about it. It is not safe for any man to ride so near the edge of disaster that if he makes one misstep it will plunge him into ruin. And yet, thousands of young men in our cities are doing this all the time; and they leave it to chance whether they shall perish or not,

How few of those that hear me believe this! But if some of you could speak there would be a resonant *amen!* from bitter hearts.

Go with me down to the last estate of the great class of ruined men. Question the pauper in the poor-house. Interrogate the tenant of the hospital, whose vices have brought him there. Ask the man of rotting bones, "Did you set out for this? When you began, was this what you meant?" He will reply, with husky voice, "No; it seemed all pleasure when I began." *There are ways that seem right to men, but their ends are death.* Ask the bloated drunkard, in some interval when his reason is lucid, "Did you aim at this? Is this the profession that you started to study? Is this the result that you meant to attain?" He will say, "No; I never thought that I should be a drunkard. I wish I had known in the beginning what I know now. I never would have touched the accursed thing if I had." Ask the miserable, kicked-about creature that wants to die, but dare not die; that hates life, but hugs life; that nobody but God cares for, or pities, or thinks of—ask him, "In those sweet days of dalliance, in those gay rides, in those delightful self-indulgent ways, in that pleasant indolence, were you proposing to yourself to die such a miserable being as you are? Did you seek this?" "No! no!" he will say. "The way seemed very different when I went into it from what it does now."

So it is that the devil tempts men, by putting flowers all around the ways of evil. He makes the first steps in the downward path to be most charming. The ground is plushy under foot, and sweet and fragrant clusters hang on each side and overhead. Step by step, as men go down, birds sing to them. And the way is delightful to them. But as they proceed, the road grows more and more precipitous. And yet, they think that a little farther on they shall strike fields of

charming experience. But alas ! a little farther down, and a little farther down, the way is more and more barren. And if they turn to go back, there are minions of the devil that urge them forward, and drive them down to the very end.

The last ways of wrong-doing are ways of unutterable sorrow and regret.

I need not draw out this matter farther. Let me say, first, in closing, that it is a great danger to any young man to be conceited in his own wisdom and in his own strength. You think you know better what will suit you than anybody else can know for you. You do not, and you are a fool for thinking so. Saith the Word of God :

“ Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.”

There are certain ways that experience has shown to be safe ; there are certain other ways that universal experience has shown to be dangerous ; and there are other ways still that experience has shown to be fatal ; and you cannot, in your early and inexperienced youth, do anything so safe as to adhere to the ways which have been tried, and have been proved to be without disaster or danger. Those who think they have a strength and a wisdom which others have not, and act accordingly, perish because they are fools. And thus thinking and acting are the very infatuation of folly.

Lastly, let me say that, as no man is safe who leans upon his own wisdom—certainly not if contrary to the instruction of his elders, and the experience of the community around about him—so no man is safe who does not give heed to the Word of God, and to the presence of the Lord. You are perfectly safe so long as you live with a consciousness that God looks upon you ; so long as you have the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, and the love of God, which is the end of wisdom. Every man needs that influence which is shed upon him by the consciousness, “ Thou, God, seest me.” Are you willing, from day to day, to open what you have been thinking during the day to the sight of God ? Are you willing, every day, to open in the presence of God what you have done ? I have known cases in which men have required themselves never to say anything, anywhere, that they would

not be willing to say in the presence of their mother. A great many men's habits of speech would be changed if they should adopt that rule. Many men will say things out of the family that they would not dare to say in it ; and it is a shame. I think that if every young man would say, from day to day, "I will put nothing into this day that I would not be willing that God should look on, and nothing that God disapproves ; I will humble myself, and cleanse my ways," it would be the most wholesome thing he could do. You need something more than your own strength, and the influence of those around about you. You need the conscious presence of your father's God and of your mother's God. Then, when you are tempted you will have a shield. Then, when you slide there will be a power to lift you up. Then, experience will not be final disaster. Then, there will be a prophecy of good that will go with you. Then, little by little the ways of wisdom will become ways of pleasantness, and all her paths will be peace, to you.

Let me speak, to night, to hungry ears. Let me speak, not to those who have well nigh gone through life, but to those who are beginning life. Let me speak to those who are just throwing out the seeds which shall by and by bring forth their harvests. I beseech of you to throw good seed into good soil. Throw not out from your hand the cockle, the chess, and the chaff. Throw not out the thistle and the thorn. Having sown good seed in good soil, commend it to God, and leave it in his care. Live by his commandments. Take his word as the man of your counsel, and your guide. Let philosophy say and do what it will, when it comes to practical, everyday life, there is no book that is so safe for a man to go by as the Bible, so full and so wonderful in its recorded experience, searching the heart, penetrating the life, inspiring men by the noblest motives and to the noblest exercises, and bringing down around about them the truths of the divine presence, so that the whole atmosphere that envelopes them is divine.

I commend you to the Word of God. I commend you to that dear God from whom it came. I commend you to the hope of a virtuous future in this life, and to immortality and glory in the life to come.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O LORD, thou art most merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin. Though thou wilt by no means clear the guilty, though thou wilt not suffer transgression to seem like righteousness, yet thy heart is toward those who transgress, to deliver them out of their sin, if they turn unto thee with sincere penitence; and thou dost help those that desire help; and thou dost succor the poor and needy when they cry unto thee. Since the ages began, thine ear has drank in the cry of the distressed from out of this world, that hath not ceased to ascend. Thou art a merciful, a long-suffering and a patient God; and thou hast delivered men innumerable, and art delivering. Thou art the Refuge from all that judge; from all that pursue; from all that hate; from all that strike; from all that seek evil.

We rejoice that we may draw near to thee with unspoken thoughts—with feelings that will not be revealed in words. We rejoice that we may open our souls before thee. We rejoice that as the sun shines upon the earth, so thou dost shine upon our hearts. And we beseech of thee, O God, that thou wilt grant to every one of us a realization of the fact that we are open before HIm with whom we have to do. May we confess our sins, and forsake them; and turn unto God with a full assurance that he forgives, and that he helps. And grant, we pray thee, that we may be renewed, by the power of hope and faith, with new life. Fill us, by thy Spirit, we pray thee, with a new purpose, with new zeal, with new obedience, adding to the past whatever is good, and taking away from it whatever is evil. Grant that we may reach forth toward a better manhood with ardor, with patient perseverance, and with a full assurance of hope.

We pray that thou wilt draw near to all who are in trouble; to all on whom thy hand rests heavily; to all who are filled with sorrow and darkness; to all who are friendless; to all who are out of the way; to all who have stumbled, and cannot rise again; to all who sit in the region and shadow of death; to all who are in prison. Open the prison-doors, thou Ambassador! Come, and save men from the bondage of sin!

We beseech of thee that thou wilt revive thy work in the hearts of thy people, that they may be more and more zealous in making known the true God. Grant that the spirit of Christ may be more and more largely diffused among thy people, that they may learn what is the power of life; and may all of us take up, more and more, the cross of Christ, and look upon it as a symbol of thy suffering. May we learn to suffer, as thou didst and dost suffer, for others. May we learn self-denial, and self-sacrifice for others. And we pray that we may be built up therein. With all humbleness of mind, and with all sense of unworthiness to do any part of the work of God's great field, may we persevere, not with the weapons of this world's warfare, but with spiritual weapons, in the work of overcoming evil; and may we pursue that which is good.

We pray for the young, who are adventuring, and whose minds are open like the ground, that there may be given them such a knowl-

edge of God, and such ways of life, that they may cleave to that which is good. And grant, O God, that the seed which brings destruction may be taken away from them, and that they may trust in the word of the Lord, and that they may have thy presence, thy Spirit, and the power of the Holy One, evermore.

Deliver, we beseech of thee, any who are wandering. Bring them back before it shall be too late. And grant that there may be raised up round about the young in these great cities those who shall love them, and watch for their souls. We pray that those who seek their harm, and guilefully spread snares before them, may be driven away, and have their evil devices brought to naught.

We beseech of thee that there may be a reformation of morals in our midst, and that men may do evil no more. Throughout this land spread the renovating and saving influence of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. May men feel the pardoning power of Jesus, repent, and turn unto him willingly. May they be converted, and begin a Christian life.

All through our land may manhood thrive. May the truth as it is in Jesus be the food of the soul. May men grow larger and larger in things right. Let thy kingdom come everywhere. Pity the nations that sit in darkness. Spread the truth abroad. Let it set men free. And bring in that glorious day of prediction when all the earth shall see thy salvation.

And to the Father, the Son and the Spirit, shall be praises, evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

ALMIGHTY God, we pray that thou wilt grant thy presence and thy blessing upon the words of truth that have been spoken, not according to the feebleness and imperfection of the offering, but according to thine own great goodness. Multiply the benefits thereof. We pray that those who listen may listen for their life. Will thou rouse the consciences of those who are going down in the way of evil. Grant that they may not come to a seared conscience; to a perverted understanding; to a deceitful heart; to ways of guile. Grant that they may come back to simplicity, and truth, and self-denial, and courage. And we pray, O Lord, that thou wilt ward off the dangers that surround the young; and smite the jaws of those that would devour them. Grant that the snares and pitfalls for the unwary may fail. May those that have been caught, but are not carried far away, be recovered. And let not those who are struggling to reach the shore be caught by the undertow, and swept helplessly out upon the vast sea. May they be rescued. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt glorify thy name by all the works of grace that thou shalt do. And may we behold, and coöperate, and rejoice. And finally bring us all safely to that land where is no sin nor temptation, but perfect purity and perfect joy for evermore. And to the Father, the Son and the Spirit, shall be praises, forever. *Amen.*

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